

the omentum in these cases have been abundantly proven.¹ To excise the mass would be to run the risk of hemorrhage, which might not be of much consequence, it is true, if the remaining portion continued in position; but, in case of its withdrawal, would lead to internal hemorrhage, and an effusion of blood into the cavity of the abdomen. It was, for these reasons, determined not to interfere actively in the local treatment of the case, but to trust to expectation, and, as the result has proved, there is no cause to regret this decision.

It was designed, on account of the interest and importance of the surgical question involved in the case here reported, and also on account of the neglect with which it has been passed by in modern systems of surgery, to consider at length the opinions of both ancient and modern surgeons in regard to the value of the different methods of treating penetrating wounds of the abdomen with protrusion of the omentum. This, however, as was afterwards discovered, has been so satisfactorily accomplished in a memoir contributed by Hipp. Larrey to the Academy of Medicine,² on the occasion of a case very similar to the one just related, that the design was abandoned.

It is thought fitting to quote the concluding sentence of this remarkable memoir of M. Larrey, as most appropriate to the present occasion:—

“May these considerations serve to demonstrate that in surgery, we can rationally and beneficially do something besides cutting, tying, excising, and destroying: it is to wait and to assist by the most simple resources of art the so powerful efforts of nature.”

ART. IX.—*Brief Account of a form of Skin Disease occurring in Manufacturers of Kerosene Oil, and believed to be undescribed.* By HARRISON ALLEN, M. D.

IN the early part of the summer of 1861 a person who had been a workman in a Kentucky kerosene oil manufactory came into the ward for diseases of the skin of the Philadelphia Hospital, having a pustular form of skin disease of a peculiar nature. The patient had had the affection six months, and attributed it to some poisonous agent employed in the manufacture of kerosene oil, as it appears that in the works in which he was employed some other of his fellow-labourers were affected in a similar manner.

The disease first presented itself upon the hands and forearms; but at

¹ Pipelet. Mémoire sur la ligature de l'épiploon, in the Mém. de l'Acad. Royale de Chirurgie, tome 3ième, p. 373. Paris, 1819.

² Sur les plaies pénétrantes de l'Abdomen compliquées d'issue de l'épiploon, in the Mém. de l'Acad. de Méd. for 1845.

the time of his admittance it had extended to the chest, back, and inner surfaces of the thighs and legs, the face and scalp being entirely free. It commenced by the appearance of a number of small papules of a reddish colour, which in the course of one or two days became marked phlyzacious pustules. Each one of them bore upon its summit a black spot closely resembling the discoloured surface of sebaceous secretion. The pustule, in about the same time as was required for its maturation, desquamated and left behind a small deep pock somewhat resembling that which succeeds the smallpox pustule, but much less significant. The time ensuing from the appearance of the papule to the formation of the pock varied, but most generally five days were sufficient for the completion. In a comparative few instances the process of maturation appeared checked and the papule would change to the pock without any pus having made its appearance. Occasionally one of the pustules, after having desquamated, would again go through the same conditions before the skin would resume its natural colour and sensation.

The eruption was most plentiful upon the anterior and posterior parts of the chest, where the papules, pustules, black spots, and minute depressions were all intermingled.

The pain was very trifling. A sensation of soreness in the pustules was complained of, which became worse at night when the patient was warm in bed. There were no constitutional symptoms whatever. The man was stout, strong, and, with the exception of the cutaneous affection, in every respect healthy.

His treatment consisted of a soda bath every morning, and five grains of iodide of potassium three times a day.

This was continued with but little advantage during the latter part of June and the whole of July. On the first of September the iodide of potassium was stopped. He now commenced with five drops of liq. potassæ arsenitis three times daily, together with the soda baths and the local application of ung. hydrarg. nitratis. Under this treatment he gradually improved. The papules became fewer and smaller until there existed but a few discoloured spots upon the back and chest, the other parts being entirely free.

The conclusion which one would naturally arrive at after hearing the history and seeing the appearance of this patient would be, either that there was some poisonous agent contained in the materials from which the coal oil is extracted, or that in the process of manufacture certain chemicals deleterious to health were employed. But, unfortunately, there is no principle or acid found in the coal upon which any suspicion can rest. Those manufacturers with whom the author has conversed refuse to accuse any set of ingredients of producing pernicious effects; but they, on the contrary, maintain that they are quite demulcent in their nature, the oil especially being used by the workmen as a local application to abrasions and burns.

On the other hand, chemists are unable to affirm that any articles used in obtaining the oil are capable of being exciting causes to disease. The substances are generally familiar acids and alkalies, and it is impossible that their accidental contact with the skin should produce a peculiar eruption which could last half a year. But it must be acknowledged that on this subject there is a certain amount of unavoidable ignorance. Each manufacturer may, and in many instances has a secret process for obtaining his oil; and of course if there be any morbid symptoms arising from the injurious employment of these agents, the nature and origin of such effects must alike remain unknown.

It would then seem that we cannot arrive at a definite and satisfactory conclusion; and we are led to suspect that the patient might have been induced to accuse his trade for causing that which would be the natural results of depraved habits. But the man has an untainted constitution and is temperate. He has never had any form of skin disease previous to this attack; and the fact that it came upon his hands first and that he suffered in common with his fellow workmen similarly engaged, go to prove the external source of the disease.

The pustules with their blackened summits resembled acne; but the face was entirely free, while the breast, back, and lower limbs were thickly strewn with them. Again: the eruption spread slowly from the hands upwards over the trunk: and it would seem that there was some deep-seated poison to produce reiterated effect; for in some instances, as mentioned above, a simple pustule would several times rematurate before resolution would occur. So that these facts, taken together, show that the symptoms of this form of eruption are quite peculiar; and although it is as yet somewhat obscure and the present advantages of investigation limited, it nevertheless presents an interest to the practitioner from the fact that it seems to have been in some manner intimately connected with the manufacture of an article which is now exciting general attention.